



## **Experiments, system innovation and sustainability transitions in Asia**

15-17 July, 2010, AMARI Rincome Hotel, Chiang Mai, Thailand

\*\*\* Call for Papers\*\*\*

### **Deadline for Short Papers: 30 April, 2010**

Transitions to alternative, more sustainable, development pathways are crucial to human well-being world-wide, but have been more studied with the focus of policy action mainly in developed country contexts. However, the transformative changes occurring now in the rapidly urbanising and industrialising Asian countries mean that this focus needs to shift. Transitions towards more sustainable development pathways are also fundamental challenges in emerging and rapidly-growing economies and societies.

Achieving a more profound decoupling of economic growth and development gains from resource and pollution intensities requires deep-seated social, institutional and technological change. Such change needs to be systemic in the sense of affecting structures and behaviour across the economy and society; what has come to be called 'system innovation'.

Previous research has shown that system innovation occurs through a quasi-evolutionary interaction between innovations emerging in niches and opportunities for change opening-up in socio-technical regimes. System innovation involves the destabilisation of existing incumbent regimes and their reconfiguration or transformation by new technologies, actors, behaviours and rules. Such processes tend to take time; typically some decades.

The new research challenge is to apply these concepts and ideas to rapidly-developing country contexts. Here socio-technical regimes are already undergoing transformation, but often following models from technologically-leading countries. The question is whether in rapidly developing country contexts we can also identify interactions between niches generating sustainable alternatives and emergent socio-technical regimes that could transform development pathways.

There is preliminary evidence of a great variety of 'sustainability experiments' – defined as planned initiatives to embody a highly-novel socio-technical configuration likely to lead to substantial (environmental) sustainability gains – underway in Asia. This conference will focus on the nature and role of these spaces for innovation in transforming Asian development pathways in field such as energy, mobility, agriculture and housing in both urban and rural areas.

The conference will take stock of what has been learned in the IHDP-IT (International Human Dimensions Programme Core Project on Industrial Transformation) over the last years, as well as move forward the new research agenda now supported by the APN (Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research). We welcome an international network of researchers, practitioners, policy makers and other actors who are interested in exploring alternative, more sustainable development pathways.

## Goals

The conference has two goals:

1. To synthesise and reflect on the current knowledge about pathways, barriers and opportunities for sustainability transitions in Asia.
2. To set up new research agendas on fostering the transformative potential of sustainability experiments in Asia.

To engage in dialog with policy, an interactive Policy Roundtable is being planned on the theme of Biofuels, with participation of policy makers and practitioners involved in the field. The aim of this Roundtable is to explore the potential of biofuels in replacing fossil fuels in Asian energy systems. We observe numerous experiments with biofuels (production and use) being developed with many different rationales (greenhouse gas emissions reductions, fuel security, sustainable development) but the sustainability of biofuels is hotly contested. Under which conditions could biofuels become a major energy source in Asia while at the same time being socially, environmentally and economically sustainable?

## Themes

Expanding on the two goals, papers on the following themes are invited:

1. Sustainable development pathways in Asia: opportunities and barriers:
  - Sustainable innovation and growth
  - Globalisation, industrialisation and urbanisation
  - Public-private innovation partnerships
  - National regulatory frameworks
  - Foreign investment and international standards
  - Corporate environmental and social responsibility
  - Consumption and behavioural changes
  - Low carbon societies and renewable energies
  - Alternative technologies, livelihoods and lifestyles
  - International organisations and their programs
2. Sustainability experiments in Asia:
  - Scoping exercises and databases of sustainability experiments
  - (Comparative) case studies: success and failure factors
  - Strategic Niche Management & other methods
  - Analyses of social learning dynamics
  - Network analyses and stakeholder involvement
  - Expectation dynamics and participatory methods
  - Impact analyses of experiments
  - Diffusion and replication of experiments
  - Analyses of policy programs
  - Politics, governance and power relationships

Papers are invited that address relevant aspects of the above two themes preferably addressing one or more of the topics identified above. We invite: historical and contemporary studies as well as theoretical contributions and empirical cases. Papers that address the themes of the conference but cover experiences from geographical regions outside of Asia will also be considered.

## **Short papers and sessions proposals**

Short papers should be 2000-3000 words in length and respond to one or more of the conference themes.

Session proposals will also be considered. They should include a session overview (600 words max) plus the set of 3-4 papers proposed for a session. A session chair should be identified.

Both, short papers and session proposals should be submitted to [it-apn2010@ivm.vu.nl](mailto:it-apn2010@ivm.vu.nl) by the 30 April 2010.

The Conference Committee will provide decisions on selected abstracts by the 30 May 2010. All accepted papers will be made available on the conference website: [www.sea-user.org/it-apn2010/](http://www.sea-user.org/it-apn2010/) prior to the meeting. Authors of accepted papers will be invited to make 15 minute presentations at the conference. The best papers (total of 25) will be selected by the Conference Committee for publication in an edited book.

## **Participation costs**

Conference registration fee is US\$150. It covers:

- Conference materials (programme, list of participants, no bags or folders)
- Lunches and coffee breaks on 15, 16 and 17 July 2010
- Reception buffet on 15 July 2010
- Dinner on 16 July 2010
- Book with selected best papers which will be produced after the conference

Participants will need to pay their own travel expenses and hotel costs at the conference venue (a block booking of rooms will be made by the organisers at preferential rates).

## **Practicalities**

All enquiries about the conference should be directed to the conference email: [it-apn2010@ivm.vu.nl](mailto:it-apn2010@ivm.vu.nl). Information about registration, accommodation, venue etc will be posted at the conference website.

## **Organisation**

The conference is organised under the auspices of the IHDP's Industrial Transformation project; APN – Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research; USER, Chiang Mai University, Thailand; Eindhoven University of Technology, The Netherlands and the Jadavpur University, India.

## **Conference Committee**

Frans Berkhout (IVM, Vrije University, The Netherlands)  
Louis Lebel (USER, Chiang Mai University, Thailand)  
Phimphakan Lebel (User, Chiang Mai University, Thailand)  
Yonglong Lu (Chinese Academy of Sciences, China)  
Anand Patwardhan (Indian Institute for Technology, India)  
Rob Raven (Eindhoven University of Technology, The Netherlands)  
Mike Rock (Bryn Mawr College, USA)  
Joyashree Roy (Jadavpur University, India)  
Geert Verbong (Eindhoven University of Technology, The Netherlands)  
Anna Wiczorek (IVM, Vrije University Amsterdam, The Netherlands)